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ABSTRACT

At Marshfield Senior High School, over one-fourth of the students were note profiting from the required social studies course, as evidenced by grades and attendance. As a result, a study was made to improve social study learning experiences in order to conform to eight assumptions about student needs, such as students need activity learning; flexible progression; multimedia instruction; reinforcement strategies; and, participation in decision-making. Learning stations were established each with a learning activity that could be completed in 20 minutes with a measurable learning goal. Students progressed through the stations in pairs, earning points for each activity. Points determined grades and free time. A cycle chart was prepared by the teacher, and in an eight-day cycle, students went through 16 stations, completing the work at two stations each day. There were ten cycles a semester. The teacher managed the system, designed the learning experiences, served as a consultant, evaluated progress, provided alternatives, and researched learning experiences. Absenteeism was cut almost in half among the 25% of the failing students. Student willingness to read and follow instruction independently increased dramatically and efforts by students to design their own learning experiences increased. (WCM)

ED 093363

SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITY LEARNING CENTER

A New Dimension

in

Personalized Learning

Submitted by
Roy J. Culley

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Marshfield Sr. High School
10th & Ingersoll
Coos Bay, Oregon

John W. Crowley, Superintendent

ER 000 851

PREFACE

This presentation is an explanation of the Social Studies Activity Learning Center and the rationale behind the program. It is the hope of this author that these comments may prove useful to those in education who may wish to increase the performance levels and improve the attitude of their students toward the learning process.

The first part of this paper will present some results of the program, followed by a detailed explanation of the rationale and the mechanics of the program.

The following was distributed to the administration of Marshfield High School shortly after the completion of third quarter of the 1971-72 school year.

Roy J. Culley

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RESULTS OF THE FIRST SSAC PROGRAM

Some Interesting Observations About Southern Lands

First quarter of the 1972-73 school year saw Southern Lands (a 9th and 10th grade social studies course) showing a 28% failing list--third quarter 4% failed. First quarter the average student missed 6.8 days--third quarter 4.8 days. First quarter and third quarter both saw 4 days absent as the median, but the median was on top of the 4's 1st quarter--on the bottom of the 4's third quarter (see attached copy). The significant thing that changed was in the highest quartile of missed days. First quarter, the upper quartile averaged 16.6 absences--third quarter, 10.8. The median of the highest quartile of missed days first quarter was 17 and third quarter 9.5. This would lead one to believe the holding power was greatly increased by third quarter. This, of course, accounts for the vast improvement in grades.

The question then becomes, "What accounts for the vast improvement in grades and attendance?" This instructor made some radical changes at the beginning of second semester that he thinks explain to a large degree the improvement. Several ideas were formulated:

1. Students need immediate enforcement and reward to be encouraged to proceed on to the next activity.
2. The student learns best by working out his own answers and given a chance to check his answers with his peers and the instructor.
3. The student will attempt something new or he believes difficult if there is a chance of success and he can see this success quickly.
4. The teacher is at his best as a designer of activities that lead the students to learning rather than as a spewer of knowledge.
5. The student can learn in a more relaxed surrounding if proper guide lines are offered.

6. The student should have the opportunity to go back and make up deficiencies without penalty.
7. The student should be allowed to substitute one activity for another.
8. If the student can look forward to doing many different types of activities over a few days period, he will not be so reluctant to attempt those areas of least desire.

This led to the adoption of station teaching. Simply, this means that in an eight school day cycle the students go through 16 stations, taking two stations each day. Each station is designed to accomplish a limited goal in a short period (roughly 20 min.).

As one can see by the statistics, it definitely seems to have merit. The instructor recognizes faults in the system, yet the results outweigh the faults to date. The designing of meaningful stations is time consuming and demands research work. It is the hope of this instructor that some arrangements can be made to further improve the system design and increase the offering under this style. It is also the thinking of this instructor that even greater improvement in student attitude and performance should take place as a result of continued improvement in the program.

Days Missed In Southern Lands First And Third Quarters 1972-73

1st. Qt.

Average 6.8
Median 4
Upper Quartile average 16.6
Upper Quartile median 17

35	3
28	2
26	2
25	2
24	2
23	2
22	2
22	2
21	1
18	1
16	1
15	1
15	1
15	1
14	1
12	1
11	1
10	1
10	1
10	1
10	1
10	1
10	1
10	0
9	0
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7	0
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3rd Qt.

Average 4.8
Median 4
Upper Quartile average 10.8
Upper Quartile median 9.5

19	2
19	2
17	2
16	1
15	1
15	1
11	1
10	1
10	1
9	1
8	1
7	1
7	1
7	1
7	0
6	0
6	0
6	0
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Some Student Responses

During the last cycle (ten cycles in a semester) students were asked the following question at the evaluation station:

"Would you recommend the class to a friend that has to take social studies next year?"

70% responded yes, 20% no, and 10% undecided. The interesting point made by the group that said no, was that many of them felt that their friends would skip too many classes to keep up the points; that their friends talked too much and therefore would not like the concentration demanded; that their friends hated social studies. The interesting thing to note was that these were the very students who had trouble in social studies classes in the past.

About three weeks after the third quarter, students were asked the following question:

"Do you feel your third quarter grade was fair or unfair?"

72% fair, 21% unfair, and 7% uncertain. Most of those responding "unfair" received B's and felt that they should have received A's.

Since Southern Lands had no homework, unless the student missed school, I asked the following question:

"Do you feel that homework would help you learn more in this class?"

15% yes, 85% no. Most of the comments stated that homework was copied anyway.

Since no lectures were given to the group as a whole, the following question was asked:

"Do you feel that the instructor should lecture?"

3.6% yes, 87% no, 3% to a certain degree, 2% undecided. The predominate comment was that no one really listened to lectures anyway.

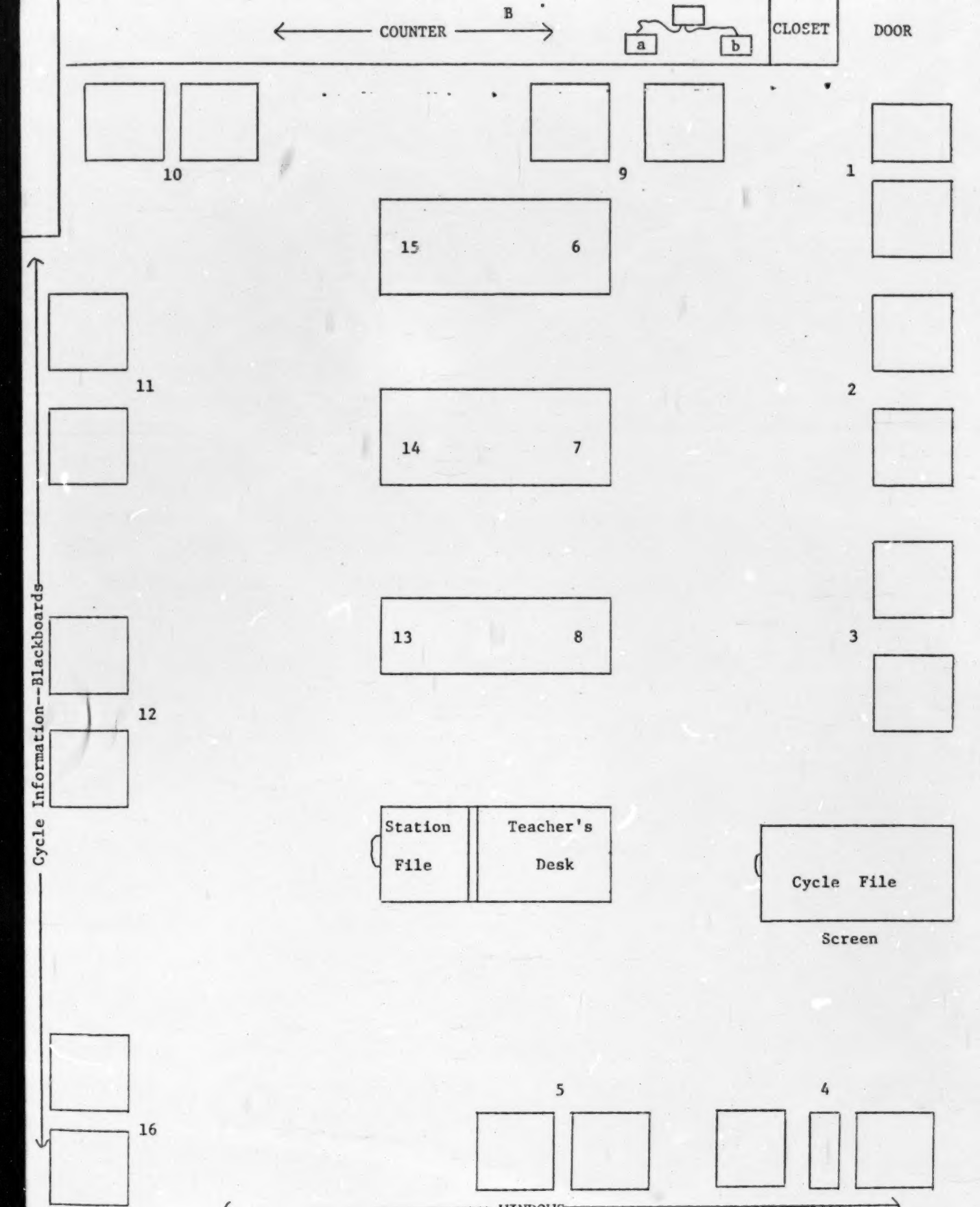
Under "traditional" methods an embarrassingly high percentage of the students scored under 50% on the test items; with SSAC it was rare that a student scored under 50%.

STATION TEACHING
FOR
SOUTHERN LANDS

Explanation of Existing Pattern

On the next page is the arrangement of the classroom for the Social Studies Activity Learning Center for the geography course called Southern Lands. The numbers represent the station positions. The smaller squares show the location of the student desks which were faced to the wall. The larger rectangles in the center of the room represent cafeteria type tables. The counter behind stations 9 and 10 held the filmstrip projectors (manually operated individual machines--labeled a and b on the chart). Station 4 shows the movie projector. The side of the grey file cabinet proved to be an excellent day light screen. The blackboards on the wall where stations 11, 12, and 16 are located were used to place the cycle chart.

This arrangement could be reshuffled to fit any instructor's needs. Tables proved to be most satisfactory, but the student desks did not prove to be a serious handicap. If possible, holders for paper would be desirable.


B
COUNTER
a
b
CLOSET
DOOR
10
9
1
15
6
11
2
14
7
13
8
3
12
Station
File
Teacher's
Desk
Cycle File
Screen
Cycle Information--Blackboards
16
5
4

Cycle Chart

The following information explains the cycle chart that was used to inform the students at which station they were to start. This was placed on the blackboard in chalk. Other instructors may find that they will want to delete and add station titles as they proceed. Also, the order may be changed. The only caution at this point is that this be done at the beginning of a cycle.

Cycle Chart

Cycle #____

1. Graphic Arts
2. Social Studies Vocabulary
3. Civics
4. Audio Center
5. Essay Composition
6. Social Studies Questions
7. Map Exercises
8. Occupations
9. Filmstrips
10. Reference
11. Climate Studies
12. Free Study
13. Current Events
14. Map Exercises
15. Social Studies Questions
16. Evaluation

Each station was a separate activity that could be reasonably completed in a set period of time (in this case 20 minutes). Each station was designed to meet the following goals:

Station Description and Goals

1. Graphic Arts - The student shall be able to read, construct, and interpret, graphs, political cartoons and charts; demonstrating a degree of proficiency that he can be certified as competent in this skill.
2. Social Studies Vocabulary - The student will be able to recognize the social studies vocabulary as being distinctive of the discipline and be able to identify terms used in social studies areas.
3. Civics - The student will be able to identify the basic elements of democracy and totalitarianism and describe what each system entails in writing.

4. Audio-Center - The student will be able to identify key ideas from visual audio material in a notetaking style.
5. Essay Composition - The student will be able to compose an essay that expresses a central idea with supporting data.
6. Social Studies Questions - The student will be able to answer teacher designed questions after reading selected material.
7. Map Exercises - The student will be able to use atlases and other map related tools to construct, locate and interpret map material.
8. Occupations - The student will be able to describe in writing, what selected jobs demand in training, qualifications, salary, working conditions, and future job potential.
9. Filmstrips - The student will be able to describe the region under study by taking notes on filmstrips dealing with the area.
10. Reference - The student will be able to demonstrate by use, how to use reference material dealing with social studies.
11. Climate Studies - The student will be able to identify and explain in writing what the climate means to each area.
12. Free Study - The student may use this time to catch up on the other activities or design his own activities that may replace existing stations, if agreed to by the instructor.
13. Current Events - The student will summarize in writing, the current events he reads in current periodicals and newspapers.
14. Map Exercises - See #7.
15. Social Studies Questions - See #6.
16. Evaluation - The student will respond to test items and respond to feedback questions evaluating the program and will suggest changes.

STATION TEACHING DESIGN

The instructor must be able to design activities in such a fashion that each activity is clearly understood by the student as to what is expected of him and why he is doing the activity. It is important that the instructor recognizes that he must assume a new roll based on the following premises. He must:

1. Be a designer of meaningful learning experiences.
2. Serve as a resource and consulcant person in the student's attempt to understand and perform.
3. Oversee the smooth operation of the system to allow maximum use of student time. (Prevent one student from disrupting the others.)
4. Clarify ambiguous and confusing transition points for the student.
5. Evaluate direction and progress of student in obtaining competency.
6. Suggest alternatives when called upon directly or when it becomes obvious that the alternatives are necessary.
7. Research new ideas that will more efficiently meet competency levels desired.

When the instructor designs the activities to be used at each station, he should be aware that he must keep in mind that each station should enhance the student's skills and add to the student's knowledge. Of the two, skills become the dominant consideration. For example, if the unit in question is Africa, and the specific goal is to be able to compare tribalism with nationalism, it is important that the student learns how to seek information about these concepts, evaluate the value systems of the concepts, as well as the meanings of the terms themselves. If the teacher supplies all material without offering alternatives, the definitions may be acquired, but the student's ability to acquire information on his own may be limited. Yet to say to a student, "We are going to study tribalism vs. nationalism today.", without any given directions as to possible alternatives will only compound the student's frustration. Examples of materials and suggested alternatives must be made available and it should be made clear that the

student may substitute his own findings if related.

The instructor should also be ready to make rapid adjustments to meet the needs of the student's capability to grasp the learning task. It may mean that the student will substitute one activity for another while the rest of the group proceeds with the given task.

The instructor should make possible an immediate plan of action for the student. If the student feels that the task at hand is possible and reasonable, he will proceed to its completion. Most students are willing to be guided if they see a relevance to the work at hand in the goals expressed, Adjustments must be made for the student who cannot do the task, or feels he cannot, or feels the task is too easy. This is individualized instruction that can be implemented and is controllable by the instructor. Too often in the past, the complexity of the task of individualizing instruction overwhelmed the instructor and the student.

One of the most difficult things for the teacher of the "traditional classroom" to accept is that it is not necessary for each activity to be built upon the last activity. It is also difficult for the "traditional teacher" to recognize that his lectures and oral presentations are not always critical to the learning process. For example, the teacher may want to teach a unit on Brazil. The "traditional" approach would possibly be to locate Brazil (map work) physically in Latin America, read and discuss Brazil's people and resources (questions from textbook and teacher oriented discussion to the class), and then relate Brazil to world affairs. This is certainly a logical approach. In most cases, in order to preserve time, the instructor supplies the outline map, map items to place on the map, page in atlas where the map can be found, reading in textbook, and teacher designed questions. The discussion is usually guided by the instructor's questioning strategy to cover as much of the content as possible in the shortest time. Then an evaluation follows this process at the end of the unit prior to moving on the next unit.

The traditional approach brings the following suppositions to the classroom and to the process:

1. Each activity should be thoroughly completed by all students so that the activity can be related directly to the next activity. (This does not take into account variances in student's ability to cope with the learning process.)
2. Everyone should start in the same place and proceed together toward the evaluation process.
3. Content dominates the process rather than student competency.
4. Verbalization in the group is essential to meaningful understanding of social studies concepts. (These students verbalize on all subjects very well outside of and within class until one attempts to organize it.)
5. The teacher's verbal instructions and lectures are of vital importance for the learning process to proceed smoothly and to get enough material across in the short time available.
6. If the content is covered and the student is led through the process, or has the skills explained, somehow the student will see the need to learn the skills in the future because he will want to have the content.

It is probable that most traditional teachers would agree generally with these presuppositions, or at least agree that they affect their teaching strategy. It is time to seriously challenge these presuppositions and open up our classrooms to measureable and realistic teaching strategies that not only challenge the students, but holds him accountable for competency in given areas.

Certain "sacred cows" should be closely examined and possibly buried.

Sacred Cows To Be Buried At High NOON

1. Each student should be expected to take no fewer than 6 periods of classes each day.
2. The teacher must lecture and lead discussions to allow students to bring central

ideas together and to learn to express themselves.

3. Each lesson builds directly toward the next idea.
4. Students can't follow instructions, so you must tell them over and over.
5. Silence is Golden.
6. Homework is essential to be able to get "everything" covered.
7. The class should always be together.
8. The student should not make decisions regarding curriculum as the teacher's experience is more valid.
9. Students learn best working by themselves.

All other long-held cliches and profound statements that may be subject to question should be thoroughly investigated. There are elements of truth in each but too often we do not examine what portion can be given life and what portion should be delivered to death.

VARIATIONS OF SSAC

In the station strategy for Southern Lands there was no provision for group discussion. Rather, the class moved from cycle to cycle until the semester ended. However, the cycle was often utilized as a data collection plan. At the end of the cycle, which would be designed to expose students to select data, the class would then be in a position to evaluate material from a value standpoint. The cycle was then frozen at a time to allow special input sessions, such as films, guest speakers, etc. One could then have general discussion and orientation before entering a cycle.

The important thing to remember is that SSAC is a system that offers a means for the student to efficiently gather material and improve skills. At the same time the system allows the student to have immediate responses and a large degree of variety. It makes it possible for the instructor to move rapidly to determine the needs of the individual because the student's difficulties will be more clearly defined by the nature of the station he is working on.

The instructor keeps in mind that stations can be added or subtracted as needs arise. Therefore, change can be introduced without throwing out entire units. Many students are helpful in making suggestions on the types of changes that can be made in stations to make them more functional. They will also be more than vocal in suggesting what should be dropped and will offer suggestions as to the types of things they would like to see added. The instructor should evaluate these suggestions and try to incorporate those student oriented ideas that would enhance the atmosphere of learning.

Selecting and Implementing Stations

To implement a successful station teaching arrangement, the instructor must isolate the skills, content, and scope that are needed to accomplish the goals set. Assuming the instructor wishes to work with a unit on the Societ Union, he must decide exactly what it is that he wishes to have the student accomplish. The following goals might be a portion of those established:

1. Physical and political locations are needed.
2. Visual and audio impressions of the Soviet Union are needed.
3. Industrial, resources and agricultural patterns are needed.
4. Outstanding personalities affecting the Soviet Union need to be examined.
5. Current happenings need to be evaluated.
6. Climate, vegetation and population patterns need to be evaluated.
7. Government and ideological concerns need to be understood.

It is decided that the student needs to be able to handle the following types of skills:

1. Read maps and legends.
2. Evaluate material that pertains to topic at hand.
3. Select main ideas with supporting data from visual and audio materials.
4. Select current articles and analyze propaganda techniques.
5. Compare ideological systems.
6. Use library, indexes, table of contents of pertinent materials efficiently.
7. Relate theory to practice.

The instructor then takes his content goals and his skill goals and examines how best to divide them into stations that are able to meet the needs of the student. The instructor may decide to establish the following stations that will be held for one class period in length.

1. Map Exercises
2. Social Studies Questions

3. Audio Visual Center
4. Current Events - Magazines and Newspapers
5. Biography
6. Climate, Vegetation Patterns
7. Social Studies Questions
8. Government
9. Vocabulary
10. Project

With this station arrangement, it would take 10 school days to complete one cycle of data collection. This can be preceeded, followed by, or broken into by class input, discussion, special speakers, etc.

Assuming that the instructor wishes to spend 4 cycles with the Soviet Union, he would then decide what types of activities he may wish to use at each station over the four cycles. For example, Station #1-map exercises:

Cycle #1--Physical Soviet Union - location of physical items on an outline map of the Soviet Union, examing the color codes and information offered in the atlas to aide in the understanding how to acquire the significance of the physical location of the Soviet Union to the world.

Cycle #2--Political Soviet Union - location of political items on an outline map of the Soviet Union, examing the legend for information dealing with urban size, transportation networks, etc.

Cycle #3--Population density of the Soviet Union - locating on the map population density areas; relate to available transportation, climate maps completed in Station #6, Cycle #1, compare to earlier population density patterns and try to determine why changes in pattern have taken place.

Cycle #4--Communist World Expansion maps - determine which nations are now under communist control, determine when acquired, and under what circumstances this was possible.

In the actual designing of the student activities, the instructor must keep in mind the time limitation to work with, gather together the materials for the student's use, clearly define exactly what the student is to actually produce and state what the student will be responsible for in a test situation.

The instructor should keep in mind that the material used in Cycle #1 can be used as supporting material in later cycles; however, with the cycle itself, each station must not depend upon the others as students will be starting at different points within the cycle.

It is also wise to design at least one station where a student is forced to design for himself an area of study. During this station time, a student may backtrack to complete incomplete stations, move ahead in interest areas, or work on the project itself. This means that the student could elect to complete the independent design station outside of class time if so desired. Notice that this station is labeled Station #10 - Project in this sample design.

The instructor should also be willing to listen to alternate suggestions made by students. A student may wish to contract to substitute a program of his own design for any number of the established stations. If the student and instructor can agree on the substitution, then the student should be allowed to proceed.

Student Arrangement

One of the first things that happens in the Social Studies Activity Learning Center is that one does away with the "traditional" arrangement of student seating and relationships. Since the students will be doing a variety of activities at the same time, it is essential that a system be devised to give some reason to the placement of students for maximum use of time.

It was found that using pairs of students at each station worked well. The class list was used to pair students by sex and to assign each pair a number. For example, let us say the following is a partial class list:

Bechtel, Kathy

Brown, Joe

Cate, Susan

Crown, Joyce

Day, Colleen

Elliott, Bob

Bechtel and Cate would be pair #1, Brown and Elliott #2, Crown and Day #3, etc. These pairs were arranged in pair order for roll taking purposes on separate paper, such as:

Bechtell, Kathy

1 Cate, Sue

Brown, Joe

2 Elliott, Bob

Crown, Joyce

3 Day, Colleen

These pairs remained together through the cycle, advancing station by station. If the pair is not compatible, one may break or rearrange the pair, but it is best to do this at the beginning of each cycle.

When the students come to class they know their pair #. Then they look at the cycle board. If they find their pair # next to the civics station, they go to the civics station and begin at that point. If they are to complete more than one station in a period, they simply move to the next highest # on the cycle board when the signal is given to advance.

If the student begins the cycle on station #3, he will end the cycle on station #2.

At the end of each station time, the student hands into the instructor a response sheet. If the student should finish early, he may ask the instructor to check his work and return to his station and make corrections or additions. If the student should be on free study or finish early, he may go to the current cycle file and pull his file for the current cycle and pull papers that are not completed or inaccurate and work on those for more credit. These papers are also placed on the instructor's desk for further points. The student may elect to go to the past cycles file and pull back assignments and add points there. Again, the work always goes over the instructor's desk.

EVALUATION AND FILING PLAN

In order to make it possible for the student to be assured that he is making satisfactory progress toward his goals, he must be constantly informed of his progress and be given an opportunity to reexamine his shortcomings. This means that the instructor must evaluate the student's attempts as quickly as possible and have a system that allows the student to see his progress by the following day.

The system that has been found satisfactory is as follows:

1. At the conclusion of any station time, the student turns into the instructor his response sheet regardless of the stage he has reached and goes on to the next station.
2. The instructor scores the paper as quickly as possible and no later than the following day before the student reenters the classroom. (a suggested method of marking is to use a scale of 0 to 10, 10 being the highest possible.) This paper is then filed in a folder that bears the student's name. The student then can check his file upon entering the class the following day or when he wishes to. This file should be readily accessible to the student.
3. This primary file will hold the papers of the current cycle. At the conclusion of the cycle, the papers should be assembled in order and points compiled on the cycle top sheet. (See attached sample.) Then the cycle top sheet with all accompaning sheets should be moved to a separate file area labeled "cycle file." The student then can see his progress as the cycles are completed. If he finds that he is not satisfied with his performance at any point, he may take those activities not finished and complete them. He may also take those sheets done in error and correct them. In both cases these points would be added to the totals.
4. The student should know what percentage of the possible points he needs to acquire a particular grade. With that knowledge he can compute his own grade at any time.

SPIN OFF EFFECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the first SSAC program resulted in some interesting spin off effects and implications:

1. Student attendance became more regular.
2. Student tardiness ceased to be a serious problem.
3. Student willingness to attempt activities increased.
4. Student frustration and apathy decreased substantially.
5. Student willingness to read and follow instructions independently increased dramatically.
6. Student awareness that discipline skills learned (or not learned) in math, English and science were relevant to task at hand.
7. Student willingness to complete or correct past activities increased.
8. Student willingness to offer feedback as how to improve learning activities increased.
9. Student willingness to attempt design of own learning experiences increased.
10. Slower students morale increased due to being part of program and knowing he may be more successful at the next station if having difficulty at the present one.
11. Most able students showed greatest reluctancy to deviate from station design if felt high grades endangered. However, they could be encouraged to venture out into unexplored ground gradually if in small enough doses.
12. "Average" students showed greatest willingness to experiment with station design.
13. Program showed the importance of an interdisciplinary approach.

CYCLE TOP SHEET

Name _____ Period _____ Cycle # _____ Total Points _____

1.	Graphic Arts	1._____
2.	Social Studies Vocabulary	2._____
3.	Free Study	3._____
4.	Audio Center	4._____
5.	Essay Composition	5._____
6.	Social Studies Questions	6._____
7.	Map Exercises	7._____
8.	Current Events-Newspaper	8._____
9.	Filmstrips	9._____
10.	Reference	10._____
11.	Climate Studies	11._____
12.	Free Study	12._____
13.	Current Events-Magazine	13._____
14.	Map exercises	14._____
15.	Social Studies Questions	15._____
16.	Evaluation	16._____

Total points _____

Less pentalty points _____

Total points granted _____